

PEOPLE

SPOTLIGHT RITA ATHAS

Bringing the world's business to Chicago

Job: Executive director, World Business Chicago, since Dec. 3.

Vitals: 60 years old; bachelor's degree in urban studies, Elmhurst College, Elmhurst, 1976; master's degree in public administration, Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, 1978; assistant to village manager, Western Springs, 1978; assistant village manager, Streamwood, 1979-81; community development director, Hanover Park, 1981-85; assistant director, Northwest Municipal Conference, Des Plaines, 1985-89; director, Northwest Municipal Conference, 1989-97; assistant to mayor/director of regional programs, Chicago, 1997-2001; deputy chief of staff for external affairs, Chicago, 2001-07.

Strong suit: Good relationships with Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley, regional leaders and business community.

Résumé gap: Lacks economic development experience.

Track record: Helped create and make viable Mr. Daley's Metropolitan Mayors Caucus.

"She's got all the diplomatic skills that you would need in the jobs that she's had," says Metropolitan Planning Council President MarySue Barrett.

Job one: Increase efforts to attract global trade and development.

Obstacles: Lack of resources. World Business Chicago has a staff of 12 and a \$2-million budget. Other big cities dwarf Chicago's spending on comparable functions.

The plan: Reinvigorate regional ties, increase board involvement in promotion efforts and make Chicago a headquarters for multinational corporations.



By Eddie Baeb